

To the FCC re: public comments on the proposed loosening of broadcast ownership regulations.

I believe that the FCC should hold the line at the current level of regulation and not open the door to further concentration of ownership into fewer and fewer hands. It's clear that allowing a single entity to own many more TV stations, along with newspapers and radio stations, makes financial sense. Economies of scale can certainly contribute to higher revenues and profit margins, which in turn can lead to a stronger, more stable business community—provided that businesses are guided by sensible and conscientious leadership and management teams.

But the admirable strength of the United States extends beyond the security of a strong economy. Our strength is rooted in the benefits that citizens derive from robust, diverse, well-informed and lively public discourse. Such well-informed public discussion of issues—political, economic, social, religious and cultural—depends on open access to information and differing points of view.

Despite the explosive growth of the Internet, both in the amount of material found there and in the number of households now on line, the most accessible source of information for most Americans tends to be television. According to Nielsen Media Research, the average household now watches TV almost 8 hours a day. Given that statistic, to further concentrate ownership of our television stations and networks (broadcast and cable) is to seriously restrict public discourse. Even though such restriction may not be the intention of the resulting station and network owners, it may nevertheless be the result. And to restrict public discourse is to run the risk of undermining, in the long term, the foundation of our democratic state: a well-informed and open-minded citizenry.

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